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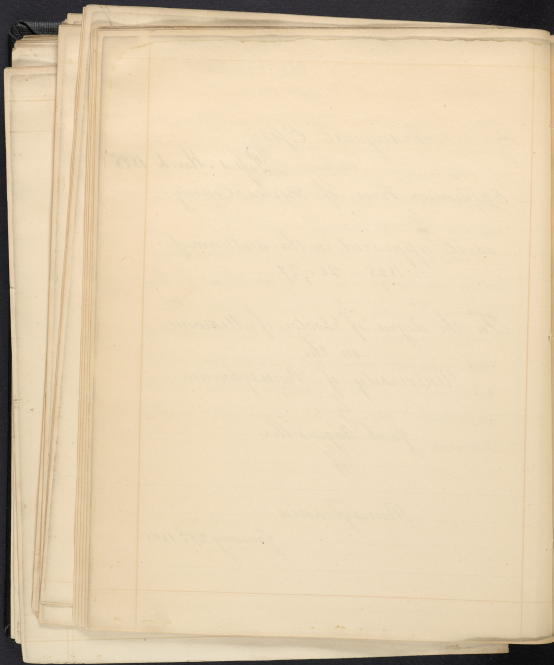
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Inaugural Essay  
on an Epidemic Fever of Berks County  
as it appeared in the autumn of  
1825 - 26 - 27.

For the degree of Doctor of Medicine  
in the  
University of Pennsylvania  
by  
Jacob Wagnerseller  
of

Pennsylvania

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There is no disease in the records of medicine of such frequent occurrence, no one that commits such ravages on the human family, or baffles the skill of the practicing physician, so much as that of fever: it therefore merits a great degree of attention and observation from the student.

Fever in its most extensive sense embraces so large a catalogue of diseases, and presents such a diversity of phenomena, which, at once will prevent me in an essay of this nature, from giving an account of its various forms. I shall therefore pursue one branch only of the disease, and make some general remarks on the nature and appearances it has presented to my immediate notice, followed by the mode of treatment which was found most successful.

The disease to which I allude has prevailed

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and the ink is very faded.  
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appearance is that of an old, unused  
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along the river Schuylkill during the last four or five years; and within the last two or three years it made its appearance and prevailed to an alarming extent in the County of Berks where I then resided.

During the summer of 1828 it was remarkably dry and very warm, which continued until the latter part of summer or the beginning of autumn.

The fever made its appearance in the months of July and August, and exhibited an intermittent type, rather mild in its commencement but grew more malignant as the season advanced. In the months of September and October it assumed a character surpassed by none in point of malignancy, known to the oldest inhabitants of that section of the county.



*Causes.*— The remote cause appeared to have its origin in the decomposition of vegetable matter, as is the case with epidemics of a similar nature.

Its first appearance in that part of the country was shortly after the commencement of the Schuylkill canal, and was attributed by most practitioners of medicine of that vicinity, to the putrefaction of immense quantities of vegetable matter; probably aided by the evolution of some peculiar principle from the exposed surface of large quantities of recently excavated earth.

It prevailed however quite extensively within the last two or three years, in the vicinity of one of the tributary streams of the Schuylkill, no doubt arising from miasm as it was very dry and consequently the sources of its production were great.



probably somewhat aided by the contaminated atmosphere being wafted from the Schuylkill by the wind, a distance only of three or four miles.

As I before observed it commenced in the months of July and August, and continued until the approach of cold weather, at which time, it subsided. It again commenced in the summer and autumn of 1826, and prevailed to a not less alarming extent; and again in the autumn of 1827, at which time it was comparatively mild and readily yielded to the ordinary treatment.

The exciting causes were various, such as sudden vicissitudes in the weather, severe exercise, intemperance in eating and drinking, exposure to wet, and to night air, wearing damp clothes, and long continued



watching are among the most common.

Symptoms.—The first symptoms of the disease were, generally a sensation of languor, loss of appetite, followed by pain in the head, back and extremities. Sometimes with nausea and vomiting, costive bowels, with a slightly furred tongue. These symptoms often continued for one or two days and sometimes longer, attended with little or no vascular excitement, until the patient was seized with a sensation of coldness, sometimes barely perceptible to him, at other times amounting to chills and even rigors, with a small irregular and frequent pulse, (more particularly irregular in aged people) considerable nausea, and vomiting sometimes of bile. The head now became more affected, the pain in the back and extremities aggravated, tongue furred gen-



orally of a yellowish hue, thirst great, and bowels costive.

After the continuance of this state of things for one or two hours, or sometimes longer, the head became hot to the touch, the pulse fuller and generally more regular, but still frequent, great nausea, and vomiting in some cases was almost incessant, with more or less of delirium.

The duration of the hot stage was generally, three or four hours, though sometimes much longer, which was succeeded by a gentle moisture about the forehead, gradually extending itself over the whole body to the great relief of the patient. The pulse now became less frequent and more regular, gradually approaching the natural standard, the head also became relieved, the stomach tranquil, tongue moist, and the urine depositing a



sediment resembling brick dust; also at this period a discharge very frequently took place from the bowels and the patient complained very little excepting of debility.

After the first paroxysm the intermission was generally so complete, that the patient was often encouraged to hope that it would not again return. But after the expiration of twenty-four or forty-eight <sup>hours</sup>, all the preceding symptoms would re-occur, and thus dispel his fond delusion. It seldom assumed the quotidian type.

As recourse to appropriate treatment was often neglected, it gradually passed on until quite a different character was presented. The quotidian type occurred two or three hours sooner each succeeding day, the cold stage was more slight and the hot stage was considerably lengthened. Thus it contin-



used to recur, the paroxysms gradually increasing in length, until a fever was formed in which there was no intermissions, and instead of a distinct chill the patient only felt a slight sensation of coolness scarcely perceptible to him. The tertian form observed the same law.

In other cases of the disease, there was from the commencement no distinct intermissions, and it then ran its course with daily remissions and exacerbations, gradually growing worse until death closed the scene, or until a critical solution took place by the efforts of nature, aided by the administration of appropriate remedies.

The disease sometimes pursued another course. It commenced as a quotidian or tertian, and the paroxysms after a few days became mild and the disease gradually

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subsidid, or ran a more protracted course, and eventuated in dropsy, or disease of the liver or spleen.

Treatment.— If we were called in the early stage when some of the above mentioned symptoms existed, as head-ach, furred tongue, inconsiderable arterial excitement, I did not hesitate to give an emetic of tartarised antimony. My mode of using this agent was to take from four to six grains, and dissolve it in as many table-spoons-ful of warm water, giving one every ten or fifteen minutes, until it operated. Large draughts of warm water were given to promote its operation. This should be succeeded by a cathartic of calomel and jalap of ten or fifteen grains each, mixed with a small quantity of jelly or something, of that nature, given in divided doses,



followed by flaxseed-tea or molasses and water to promote its operation. After which the patient was kept on barley or rice water or gum arabic dissolved in water for a day or two, at which time he in all probability would be well.

When not called until the disease was perfectly formed, with great determinations to the head, hot dry skin, pulse full and active; it then was necessary to precede the above mentioned treatment by blood-letting and cold applications.

After a complete evacuation of the alimentary canal, which was essentially necessary, the most successful treatment was small doses of tartarised antimony in solution, or combined with the sulphate of magnesia. These remedies, with occasional small doses of calomel, gave great relief to the patient in a short time.



At other times, the disease presented an aggravated appearance; the head being much affected, the tongue parched and of a florid colour, particularly on the edges and tips, attended with considerable uneasiness about the stomach, frequent vomiting, with more or less pain upon pressure, on the epigastric region, with some delirium. All such cases called for a prompt and decisive treatment. The very best was, general blood-letting, followed by leeches to the epigastric region, with cold applications to the head, and when the heat of the surface of the body was much above the natural standard, cold water or vinegar and water, applied with a sponge was of great importance.

It was then necessary to open the bowels which was best accomplished by a laxative enema, at the same time a calomel



was given by the mouth and purged off with  
Castor oil or calcined magnesia, if the stomach  
were not too irritable.

The symptoms by this time were somewhat  
mitigated; the next indications were to calm  
the irritability of the stomach, and produce  
a slight determination to the surface. The  
first was met by giving the effervescent draught,  
the oil of mint, or some other article of a  
similar nature; and to accomplish the second  
indication nothing appeared to be so beneficial  
as small doses of tartarized antimony.

In conjunction with the above mentioned treat-  
ment calomel was given in doses of from one  
to three grains, or when the stomach was very  
irritable still smaller doses were given which  
was purged off as before stated.

Local affections were treated by cold applications,  
leeches, or cups, pediluvium, or sinapisms to the



soles of the feet, and in the advanced stage, blisters over the affected organ or sometimes to the extremities, constituted the treatment which was found most successful for the disease in question, with occasional variations owing to idiosyncrasy or some other cause.

This treatment persisted in, would generally insure a cure in the space of one or two weeks, according to the violence of the symptoms, unless he was previously nearly worn out by intemperance, age, or disease, in which cases it frequently proved fatal.

The calomel appeared to perform a very important part of the treatment, for almost invariably after the exhibition of a few doses, a discharge took place from the mouth, of a dark tarry fætid nature, followed by great relief to the patient.

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The tongue then became clean, the skin cool, re-  
laxed and perspirable, the head relieved, the  
pulse slower, fuller and more regular.

Tonics were now demanded: the very best of  
which, appeared to be the sulphate of  
quinine, given in doses of one grain or more  
every two or three hours, aided by some bit-  
ter infusion, as the gentian, columba, or  
orange peel, together with a well regu-  
lated diet and appropriate drinks.

Doctor of Medicine by

Dr. W. C. C. C. C.

Dr. W. C. C. C.

Dr. W. C. C. C.

to prepare the business of the day  
and to prepare the mind of the  
people to receive the new  
truths which were about to be  
revealed. It is the object of  
this paper to give a more  
correct view of the doctrine of  
the resurrection, as the doctrine of  
the resurrection is the basis of  
all other doctrines. It is the  
basis of the doctrine of the  
future life, and of the doctrine  
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